

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, it is with a sense of disappointment and concern that I rise tonight to respond to a misguided initiative that some of my colleagues in this House are involved with. Several Members of Congress have attached their names to a letter to President Clinton that makes some outrageous and false charges about recent events in India. I believe these claims cannot go unchallenged.

The letter repeats the malicious claims that the massacre of 36 Sikh villagers in Chittisinghpura, in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, was the work of Indian security forces. That massacre occurred on March 20, at the beginning of President Clinton's historic trip to India. I had the opportunity to take part in the President's trip, and this tragic and shocking massacre did cast a shadow over the trip. It left a deep sense of sadness among all of us in the American delegation and among all the people of India that we encountered. President Clinton condemned the attack in the strongest terms.

Less than a week after the attack, Indian investigating agencies in Jammu and Kashmir made an arrest in the case, apprehending one Yakub Wagey, a terrorist belonging to the Hizbul-Mujahideen. Mr. Wagey, a resident of Chittisinghpura, revealed that the massacre was the work of a group of 16 to 17 terrorists, including six militants of Hizbul-Mujahideen and 11 to 12 foreign mercenaries owing allegiance to Lashkar-e-Toiba, the LeT. Both of these terrorist organizations are on the long list of terrorist organizations that receive support from Pakistan.

This terrible incident was the first large-scale attack against the Sikh community in Jammu and Kashmir, but it is consistent with the ongoing terrorist campaign that has claimed the lives of thousands of peaceful civilians in that state. This terrorist campaign has repeatedly and convincingly been linked to elements operating within Pakistan, often with the direct or indirect support of Pakistan's government.

As I discussed in this Chamber earlier this week, the Pakistani-supported terrorist campaign has ethically cleansed Jammu and Kashmir of its indigenous Hindu community, the Kashmiri Pandits.

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The terrorists have also sought to clear out members of other Muslim sects or those Muslims who cooperate with the lawful Indian authorities of the state. And now with this incident, the ethic cleansing campaign has turned on the Sikhs.

It is no coincidence that this massacre took place during President Clinton's visit to South Asia. I believe that these terrorist groups and their supporters in Pakistan wanted an incident that would draw attention to the Kashmir issue. Pakistan has been seeking to internationalize this conflict for years.

What better time to perpetrate a high-profile atrocity like this then when the President of the United States is in the region with all the attendant diplomatic and media attention that such a visit brings with it.

What makes the claim that India was behind the massacre all the more absurd, I mean this is why it is absurd. At a time when India was before the world stage, what possible motive would there be for such an ugly incident to detract from all the positive publicity India was seeking to generate. It does not make any sense.

Mr. Speaker, this allegation really makes no sense at all when we look at the record of the two South Asian neighbors, India and Pakistan. India is a secular, pluralistic democracy that seeks to promote civil and human rights for all of its many ethnic, linguistic and religious communities. Pakistan is a military dictatorship that has a long record of fomenting instability and violence in Kashmir while denying human and civil rights at home.

One of the motives behind trying to link India to the attack against the Sikh villagers in Kashmir is to try to generate separatist sentiment against India's Sikh community. Indeed, I understand that an organization based here in this country that seeks to promote the Sikh separatist cause has lent its support to the letter circulating on Capitol Hill.

The reality is that, in India's State of Punjab, where the Sikhs constitute a majority, Mr. Prakash Singh Badal, who happens to be a Sikh, has been elected as Chief Minister of the State. The predominantly Sikh Akali Dal Party holds a majority in the State's legislature. The State government has set up the Human Rights Commission whose primary purpose is to investigate claims of human rights abuses by government security forces, just as India has done on the national level.

The democratically-elected Sikh political leaders in Punjab are not buying the claims of Indian Government responsibility for the atrocity that took place in Kashmir this past March.

Mr. Speaker, finally I want to say, India's Democratically-elected leaders will admit that there have been abuses by security forces. There is also violence between various religious and ethnic communities which is not officially condoned. In both cases, India has sought to crack down on these kinds of acts in an honest and effective way that makes it a model among the nations of Asia.

The call by some of my colleagues to declare India a terrorist nation is completely unreasonable. Indeed, following from the President's recent trip, cooperation against terrorism is one of the major areas of U.S.-India bilateral cooperation.

The idea of cutting off aid to India, an approach that has repeatedly been tried and failed here in the House, is even more absurd, seeking to send a

message by cutting vital nutrition and health care.

TRIBUTE TO DR. WALTER D. "WALLY" WILKERSON

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TOOMEY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BRADY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to pay tribute to one of my constituents, a very special man, Dr. Walter Wilkerson, Jr., who, on June 24 of this year, will be stepping down as Chairman of the Texas Board of Health.

Dr. Wilkerson was appointed to the Texas Board on June 7, 1995; and shortly after that, on September 1, Texas Governor George W. Bush named him chairman. We are fortunate in Texas that, although his term as chairman is ending, he will continue to serve on the Board of Health.

As chairman, Dr. Eriksson took on the health care needs of every single Texan, building an awareness that public health is for everyone, every day, and everywhere. He has been a listener who steered his board and agency to consensus on almost every difficult issue that came before it.

Furthermore, under his tenure, the Texas Board of Health has had a strong relationship with the Texas Medical Association, made significant strides in developing a partnership with local health directors and local health policymakers. He has made a significant effort to maintain an open and respectful dialog with the business communities. And all of Dr. Wilkerson's efforts have been designed at building a cooperative environment for the betterment of the health of every Texan.

At the beginning of his tenure on the Board, he retired from private practice in Conroe, Texas, to be joined in 1958 after graduating from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School in 1955. In 1951, Dr. Wilkerson received his Bachelor of Science degree from Texas A&M University, which I am proud to represent.

While a practicing physician in Conroe, though he sought no honors, Dr. Wilkerson was named Outstanding Citizen of Montgomery County in 1974 and in 1991 was the Texas Family Physician of the Year and named by the Texas Academy of Family Physicians.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Wilkerson is a man of integrity and dedication; and Texas is a much better place because he agreed to answer the Governor's call and provide us leadership. I am honored to call him my friend.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY IS OUT OF CONTROL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BERRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BERRY. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to call attention to the fact